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Letter dated 21 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter dated 20 April 2017 from the Special Representative of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces to the United Nations, Najib Ghadbian (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated to all members of the Security Council as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Abdallah **Al-Mouallimi**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 21 April 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

It is with grave alarm that, on behalf of the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, I draw your attention to the continuing attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure across Syria since the barbaric chemical weapons attack on the people of Khan Shaykhun, Idlib, perpetrated by the Syrian regime on 4 April 2017.

Just hours after Assad's forces brutally gassed more than 70 civilians to death, including 25 children and 16 women, the Syrian regime waged a brutal assault, using conventional weapons to kill 530 civilians across Syria. On 7 April, mere hours after the United States launched retaliatory strikes in response to Assad's chemical weapons attacks, the Syrian regime carried out a second chemical weapons attack on the Qabun neighbourhood of Damascus. The Assad regime and its allies subsequently resumed their attacks on civilians in Aleppo, Idlib, Hama, Damascus, Dar'a and Homs.

At least 214 civilians have been killed in Syria since Assad's chemical weapons attacks, including 58 children and 31 women, according to the Violations Documentation Center in Syria. Of these civilian deaths, 68 per cent were due to aerial bombardment by the Syrian regime and its allies. The Syrian Network for Human Rights documented no fewer than 14 attacks on vital civilian facilities by the regime and its allies, targeting four medical facilities, three schools and one civil defence centre, in the five days after the US strikes.

Indeed, the levels of violence since the US strikes are similar to the levels during the same period last year, resulting in 140 civilian deaths (91 of which were caused by regime and allied warplanes). Assad's conventional attacks on Syrian civilians violate international humanitarian law and numerous Security Council resolutions, among them resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2254 (2015). Yet, to date, they have passed without consequence. It is clear that such attacks will only continue in the absence of comprehensive civilian protection measures.

If the US strikes are to deter future attacks on civilians, effectively counter terrorism and lay the basis for a sustainable resolution to the Syrian conflict, then the members of the Security Council must join the United States in developing a comprehensive approach that prioritizes civilian protection, deters both conventional and chemical attacks, effectively eradicates terrorist groups and holds perpetrators of attacks on civilians to account.

If we are to end the Syrian conflict, effectively counter terror and stem the refugee crisis, then the international community must be prepared to deter all illegal, indiscriminate attacks on civilians, whether these are perpetrated through conventional or chemical means. We look to Member States, acting within or outside the Security Council, to exert their leverage over the Syrian regime and its allies in order to ensure that they engage in meaningful peace talks. This is the only way to end the bloodshed and the instability that the conflict has brought to the region and the world.

(*Signed*) Najib **Ghadbian**
Special Representative to the United Nations